

# Exhibit 35

A MINI-HISTORY  
"Some Background"  
© 2001 **S. Ditko**

After I left Marvel (1966), I wrote a rough record of my early involvement with Spider-Man (S-M), Dr. Strange and The Hulk. One reason was because Stan Lee and Jack Kirby were each claiming sole credit as "creator" of Spider-Man (and other Marvel characters). There was no real interest by them (and others) in whether the concept and claim of "creator" was a self-imposed label, credit, or a claim that could and should be validated.

Comic fans and the fan press sided with one personality or the other, believing the 'who' was more important, truthful, than the 'what', the actual facts. It was a case of the subjective, the emotional judgement, or the intrinsic, of facts and truth being inherent in the personality that "proved" the claim.

Those two methods rejected the objective method of seeking and identifying facts, of using reason and logic to prove an understanding and knowledge.

Another reason for the record was that many arbitrary opinions were (and still are) circulating regarding the "truth" as to why I left Marvel (and other relationship or story issues). Those claims of "knowledge" came from Marvel insiders and outsiders, "truth" from others.

I know why I left Marvel but no one else in this universe knew or knows why. (It may be of a mild interest to realize that Stan Lee chose not to know, to hear why, I left. More on that later.

So there is a long, published paper trail of articles, interviews, letters to editors, claims and counterclaims, arbitrary assertions of all kinds in spoken and published verbiage. Yet the actual problems of the "creator" and other issues, the answers and solutions, remained ignored and unsettled.

This is because the overriding, operating mentality ignored, evaded, denied and discarded facts and treated objectivity and rational thought as disposable. The result was others creating and sustaining a trail of published waste paper and verbal litter.

Neither the insiders nor the outsiders were willing to offer the necessary validation for their claims, assertions, "truth" and "knowledge". None actively involved seemed to be able to know how to effectively deal with the polluting verbiage. The created litter trail became wider and deeper.

No one actively involved was seeking to establish a coherent explanation, a valid whole, for the numerous parts. Too many people just kept dumping their impossible-to-prove verbiage, their mental trash.

The subjective, the personally wanted gratification, and the intrinsic as truth residing in the personality, are not valid means of understanding the real world of facts – the real of anything. That understanding requires objectivity using reason and logic.

What was needed was a variation of the model, method, of a legal court system where the burden, the onus, of proof is on the one who makes the positive claim. He has to prove his case. He has to supply valid supporting material, relevant testimony. He needs to convince a "jury" that he alone is speaking the truth, that he is in fact the "creator".

But no reasonable standard of validating claims was sought, offered or used, and no responsible evaluating and judging scale was operating. The models were more like special interest groups, of pressure gangs, of attention seekers after publicity, of anyone with access to the comic fan press. There was no goal of understanding the issue, to be just.

Too many persons just wanted to have their own way accepted as proven and final: case, issues, closed. The creator context was and still remains a verbal free-for-all where no valid cognitive principles rule. It is like spectators insisting on playing a game they don't understand, are not qualified to play, and acting like combatants. They are mouthing their arbitrary blows and claiming a knockout, demanding to be hailed, crowned, the winner.

That "creator" game is supposed to be taken seriously and the participants worthy of consideration like children's fantasies replacing a scientist's reality.

Once I left Marvel, I had no interest in the company, its comics, or games by insiders and outsiders, by others. I had many new interests: Wally Wood, Tower Comics, *Witzend*; Archie Goodwin, Warren, wash jobs; Joe Gill, Charlton, *Blue Beetle*, "Question"; my own creations, "Mr. A", etc.

Some people had only one continuing interest: to establish the unearned, undeserved, title of "creator".

So for 30-plus years, the "one and only creator" theme continued to pollute various publication outlets. The subjective and intrinsic mentalities continued their unquestioning, unchallenging and self-blinding support of the non-validated claims.

Then came a new, added claim by the "creator" in the form of claiming "creator credit" for "creating" a specific panel "idea".

Stan Lee, in a *Comic Book Marketplace* interview (#61, July 1998):

"I didn't write detailed scripts for him [Steve Ditko], I would tell him (as I did Jack [Kirby]) what I thought the story should be and he went home and drew it any way he wanted.

"There is a very famous scene he did in a Spider-Man story (#33, Feb. 1966] where he was trapped in a subway tunnel and had to lift some heavy weight over his head. I just mentioned the idea but Steve drew it incredibly...devoting, I think, 3 or 4 pages to Spider-Man lifting those weights. I hadn't thought of devoting that many pages to it."

I wrote to *CBM* (Sept-Oct 1998) that Stan did *not* give me that "idea" and *could* not have given me that "idea". I will deal with that "idea" in a more appropriate context and the wider implications of Stan's "creative" credit claiming and credit keeping.

It was three closely related public incidents and their implications that caused me to break my silence regarding the games of others and the "creator" issue. 1) *Time* crediting Stan as the "creator" of Spider-Man (Nov. 6, 1998), 2) the *CBM* interview with Stan (#61, July 1998) and 3) Stan's own "Soapbox" in Marvel comics (May 1999).

The three combined items demanded a balancing of the scales of identification, just credit and just treatment. Those three incidents led to "Tsk! Tsk!" #1 and "Tsk! Tsk!" #2 that I published in *The Comics* (July 1999 and Aug. 1999) and reprinted in *Steve Ditko's 32-Page Package #5* (May 2000).

Others – insiders and outsiders – kept adding to the verbiage/paper trail by their continuing to claim "facts and truth" about the one "creator" (and other issues involving me, Stan and Marvel).

It has become a self-perpetuating *blabbermill* of uninformed, arbitrary claims, opinions, dishonesties and actual lies. It is an ongoing flow of sound waves and grammar with no cognitive meaning.

For too many, if a dynamited forest fell in front of them, their five senses would not register anything. Their mouthing sounds can be heard by ears, their written words can be seen by eyes, but both are meaningless when evaluated and judged by a reasoning mind.

As late as 1999, Stan wrote in "Stan Lee's Marvel Soapbox" (May): "You know me, I'll take credit for anything that isn't nailed down".

In his *Tampa Tribune* interview (Dec. 7, 1999) Stan was asked to name his favorite creation: "I don't know... Dr. Strange. Well, Spider-Man, he's the most famous character I created."

This after his "To Whom It May Concern" statement dated August 18, 1999 (*The Comics* November 1999): "I have always considered Steve Ditko to be Spider-Man's co-creator." "Considered" means to ponder, look at closely, examine, etc. and does *not* admit, or claim, or state that Steve Ditko is Spider-Man's co-creator. Too, Stan's statement contradicts some of his earlier claims that the "first sayers" of "the idea" is the "creator" (*The Comics Journal* 111, Sept. 1986, page13), and other paper trail interviews.

And a Stan Lee letter in *The Comic Reader* (#6, February 1963): "We have a new character... named Dr. Strange...Twas Steve's idea."

So it is past time to raise the other half of the cognitive curtain and see which performer is laying out the clearest, honest scenario.

A measuring scale has two sides that have to balance for a just measurement, a true identification. The scale can show a sample to be gold ore, pure gold or fool's gold. The 30+ years of verbal, published, claims need to be tested for purity, truth of the content.

Most readers are aware of the practice of "creative" bookkeeping in producing successful TV shows. There is also a "creative" credit claiming and credit keeping in a comic character's "creation" and success. Some "creative" gimmicks will be exposed and explored later.

For the first mini-history, I decided not to start from the beginning but to begin with one of the dumbest on-going insiders and outsiders "true stories" and numerous "facts" concerning and revolving around The Green Goblin.

This will assume some familiarity with the then "Marvel Style" of doing comics at that time (the Marvel Style changes). I don't know why anyone not so familiar would be interested or care one way or the other.

So the mini-history will be more of a sketch, where the subject (content) is recognizable in essential features (relevant, selected aspects) but will not have the photo-realism details wanted or demanded by some (or many).

You are warned. You are free to serve on a "jury" or just be a spectator, to be as interested or uninterested as you choose.

Whatever the choice, the existence of the measuring, judging scales method can no longer be denied or evaded.

**A MINI-HISTORY**

## 1. "The Green Goblin"

© 2001 **S. Ditko**

First, some needed background: Stan Lee never wrote a full script for any Spider-man, Dr. Strange or Hulk story (or any of the five-page back-up stories) we did together. A full script is where the writer alone decides on the complete story line. He breaks down the story for the number of panels needed for every page, describes every panel idea (setting, action, mood, etc.) and he writes all the captions and dialogue.

That fully detailed story script is given to an illustrator.

The panel's artwork is story illustration. The script illustrator illustrates the writer's written panel ideas. His job is to translate the script's conceptual material into an equivalent perceptual material: the verbal into the visual; the writer tells an idea, the illustrator shows the idea in a composition, a picture. At its best, it is a harmonious integration of the two distinct divisions of labor: a full script writer and a story illustrator.

For Marvel's Spider-man, Dr. Strange and Hulk stories, Stan wrote a synopsis, a one- or two-page brief story outline. His synopsis contained *no* panel/page breakdown, *no* specific panel ideas, *no* captions or panel dialogue, so there was *no* full story. A synopsis is an incomplete story line. As such, it cannot be translated into an equivalent, useable picture story.

A full script is a complete verbal story, a *creation*. But since it lacks illustrations, it is *not* a publishable comic book story *creation*.

A synopsis is also a *creation*. But it is *not* a complete story creation as a full-script.

A writer can be a *creator* of a full-script or a *creator* of a synopsis. But the *creator* and the *creation* ends there. Their *creation* is fulfilled, complete, the end product of one mind and hand.

While a created full script needs an illustrator, a created synopsis needs an artist - a *creative* artist. The artist has to collaborate – *co-create* – by supplying additional story ideas and story line for a *publishable* story/ art creation. The artist has to collaborate with the synopsis writer in providing, in *co-creating*, the rough equivalent of a full-script, a complete page/panel story idea breakdown. Then, alone, the artist creates the visual story/art continuity. He provides rough panel dialogue, a rough full script for the writer to use, edit and, for the final panel, dialogue.

Stan surrendered his part of the writer 's division of labor, as a writer of a full script, to the artist. He also incorrectly identified the true roles and function of each person in the way he wrote credits (to be dealt with later).

... back to The Green Goblin. The Green Goblin was introduced in *The Amazing Spider-man #14* (July 1964). The story guest stars The Hulk. (That cover plays a problem and solution that will be explained in an appropriate context.)

Stan's synopsis for The Green Goblin had a movie crew, on location, finding an Egyptian-like sarcophagus. Inside was an ancient, mythological demon, The Green Goblin. He naturally comes to life.

I rejected Stan's idea.

Why? For the same reason I rejected other ideas of Stan's on Spider-man. (Others to be explained in due time.)

The mythological creature was too far out for Spider-man. Since Peter Parker is a teenage costumed hero, I believed we should keep Spider-man's fiction from becoming too fantastic. A mythological demon made the whole Peter Parker/Spider-man world a place where nothing is metaphysically impossible. It would open up the story line to anything goes. Any kind of idea is easier to come up with than the best idea for the character. But especially with a teenage hero, the story line's premise should show him growing up in a more stable, understandable environment, story world. That is why I showed so many panels with Aunt May, J. Jonah Jameson, and Peter Parker in school with classmates (which Stan did not like).

A line has to be drawn for what is acceptable and not acceptable for a character. (I even had magic limits on Dr. Strange. *Amazing Spider-man Annual #2* (1965) featuring Dr. Strange, was, as an annual should be, a special event. It does not necessarily have to connect with the monthly adventures. And Spider-man was already long undercut with space aliens.)

Then, at some point before issue #25 (where I am publicly credited with plotting Spider-man and Dr. Strange), Stan chose to break-off communicating with me.

That initiated break-off means *no* Stan Lee synopses, *no* kind of Stan Lee input, *no* Stan Lee "ideas" of any kind on anything. And certainly *no* "lifting idea" for issue #33 (Feb.1966).

I'm on my own in providing a// the story ideas, story continuity, for Spider-man (Dr. Strange).

Before Stan's choice, decision, in initiating the breakoff and sustaining the no-communication between us, we had a specific, working, collaborating system. When Stan gave me a synopsis, I would read it and we would go over it for clarification, etc.

On my own, I would decide how to fill in and work out the whole story line, to change, reject, add, etc.

I would work out the number of panels for every page, the story idea for every panel, sequence, the whole story continuity.

I penciled the panels and made a rough dialogue script for every panel as a guide for Stan's panel dialogue.

We would go over every penciled panel. Stan would see, understand, what I did with his synopsis and why. I noted any needed changes, adjustments, additions, etc., on a page border; they would be fixed by me after the lettering and before I did the inking.

We also went over the inked version to which what S-M/villain action could make a good cover idea. I would sketch the possible ideas until we arrived at the one that looked best.

This was our cover idea method until Stan wanted me to do the covers on my own. (The reason to be explained later.)

In choosing not to see and communicate with me, Stan never knew what he was getting in my Spider-man (Dr. Strange) stories and covers until after the ritual where Sol Brodsky took the material from me, took it into Stan's office and came out saying nothing about anything.

So their couldn't have been any kind of disagreement or agreement, *no* exchanges, *no* "lifting idea", *no* problems between us concerning The Green Goblin or about anything else from before issue #25 (June 1965) to my final issues. On my own, I changed Stan's mythological demon into a human villain. So I had to have some definite ideas: who he was, his profession and how he fit in the Spider-man story world. I even used an earlier, planted character associated with J. Jonah Jameson; he became The Green Goblin. It was like a sub-plot working its way until ready to play an active role.

Stan used The Green Goblin again in #17 (Oct. 1964) and #23 (Apr. 1965) and I continued to use and develop The Green Goblin in his twin roles until I left Marvel.

Another point to clear up is that it was my policy to personally take in my penciled and inked pages and to pick up the lettered pages to be inked.

I did it because it is easier to solve any actual story/ art problems with the problem before us. The problems were more perceptual than conceptual. Just hearing about a problem over a phone or with some notations on the art page is inadequate.

When I picked up pages to be inked, I considered or ignored any story/art comments made by Brodsky. I don't know if the actual source was Stan or Sol.

I was under no obligation to correct a situation I did not initiate. The responsibility of resolving the situation rested with Stan.

So whatever the source, whatever the claims, the printed items revolving around The Green Goblin, they have nothing to do with the factual situation among Marvel, The Green Goblin, Stan and me.

The real issue had to be what is the best for a particular unique character? That means coming up with credible, formidable villains, memorable supporting characters, having meaningful relationships for conflict and dramatic possibilities, in a credible, fictional story/adventure world where the too far out doesn't get in.

That involves an individualist approach rather than conforming to any idea: using villains from another book or the fad of the moment such as wearing turtleneck sweaters and Nehru jackets which came into comics fashion, "realism", and soon went out.

And the focusing on the 'who ', the status of a personality, and not on the 'what', the published story/art content, or seeking, claiming, to be the "one", the "creator" who "created" it all, makes no sense in the real world.

Or it makes as much sense as either hydrogen or oxygen claiming to be the "creator" of the "creation", water.

Alone, the metaphysical "one" would remain a gas in a waterless world. Alone, in a comic book world, the potential would never be actualized in a published Spider-man.

NEXT: *"Amazing Fantasy #15"*



### A MINI-HISTORY

#### 3. "The Amazing Spider-man #1"

© 2001 S. Ditko

*The Amazing Spider-man #1* (March 1963) was the first all-S-m comic book from Marvel's Publisher, Martin Goodman, and Editor, Stan Lee.

That first issue was the best time, opportunity, to establish the groundwork, the nature of the teenage hero's story adventure world.

So what was presented? What kind of story foundation did we end up with?

The cover was penciled by Jack Kirby and inked by me. The cover featured the guest-starring Fantastic Four. The book contains two independent stories. They were both credited as "Script: Stan Lee Art: Steve Ditko". There was no Stan Lee script. I worked from two synopses.

And I provided a rough panel script – dialogue – for the penciled story panels plus whatever clarification needed when we went over the penciled panels.

The first thing that may be noticeable is the color on S-m's costume on the cover. My original color combination was a warm red orange on the webbing section and a cool blue on the body parts. These colors made a nice contrast, they emphasized the webbing and added to the mystery mood.

S-m's blue was changed to a warm purple inside the book (it gets warmer, redder, in later issues, ruining the better contrast and mood).

S-m's cool blue was removed because the color blue was "owned" by the guest stars' costume color. That is another example of others, outsiders (OOs), of the strip setting the terms of how the insider must be colored from then on.

The integrity of S-m was undercut, subordinated, because the likes and wants of OOs were held to be more important. What was none of the OO's business had the power to dominate, control the insiders.

The first story was untitled (14 pages, 3 parts). J. Jonah Jameson (JJJ) was introduced and S-m rescued JJJ's test pilot son from a disabled space capsule circling earth.

I wrote in "The Green Goblin" (*The Comics*, July 2001) of my dislike in having Peter Parker/Spider-man involved in mythology (The Green Goblin as an ancient demon). I preferred that we have PP/S-m ideas grounded more in a teenager's credible world.

The space capsule problem is a real world actuality but it was far beyond what a teenage hero could become involved with.

An ignored fact (a "realism") is that the disabled space capsule and S-m's rescue of it would become a worldwide news spectacle. It would have all kinds of continuing ramifications for the character's following story line.

One can't create such a spectacle as a one-shot phenomenon and expect it to just evaporate, disappear like some passing incident such as showing or using some real life personality in a story for "realism". What did the continuing UFO phenomenon start from?

The space capsule incident involving JJJ's son may have been a legitimate way to introduce JJJ and his foolish yet interesting antagonism toward S-m and his relationship with PP. But the story idea undercut the teenage context. It's like having a high school football player playing in the Super Bowl.

The second story (14 pages) was entitled: "Spider- man vs. the Chameleon". The Fantastic Four (FF) guest starred.

That story involved an *innovative idea*. That idea came about after Stan and I went over the penciled Chameleon story/art pages. I had *shown* S-m going after the Chameleon in the dark.

Stan asked me a very good question: "How, in a darkened room, does S-m know where the Chameleon is?"

At some point I took a pencil and drew squiggly lines radiating from S-m's head and said, "S-m has ' *spider-senses* ', the way bats can detect, sense insects, objects at night.



Stan accepted the idea as valid. The “senses” worked for the character. We went over the earlier pages, panels and wherever we thought appropriate, I added the squiggly lines denoting the *spider senses* around PP/ S-m heads.

And yet, while Stan liked the spider-senses idea, there later came a time when he wanted me to *stop using* the visual spider-senses. I'll get into the *why* at a more appropriate time.

I had first used the idea of a radiating effect in a Charlton Press story (and cover panel) in *Space Adventures* vol. 3, #36, Oct.1960. I showed a *split face* and upper chest of Captain Adam, U.S. Air Force officer, and Captain Atom, his super-hero identity. I made the electron lines and star effects radiating from the split half of Captain Atom.

The problem of a story idea far outside a teenager 's world, such as a space capsule, could also be said about PP/S-m's encounter with a Soviet submarine. It's like elevating a local issue onto the international level, a forced "realism". The idea is more fitting for Captain America.

The story did offer a great opportunity to demonstrate the many uses of S-m's webbing from his wrist web-shooters. That variety of action could never be done with a web gun.

There were (are) S-m followers who believe the story/ art material had a "realism " because of PP sewing or washing his S-m costume, etc. But those and other "realistic" touches were minor compared with ideas too far removed from the teenager's world.

Something is gained by the far-out story ideas (space aliens, etc.) and something is lost. The trade-off, compromise, can do more harm than good, corrupting a valid character's premise.

It can be like accepting and believing that a lie or a flaw is as good as or even better, superior to the truth, unflawed. It becomes tempting when it is for some expedient, short-term gain or pay-off.

Yet it can only be a matter of time before the easiest way – some gratifying idea, gimmick, a "feel good" idea – becomes the "right", "best" way to do the feature.

That easy/"right" method can take over, dominate the story line focus and ideas. Then one doesn't need to have any strictly defined story idea rule or criteria. One will "believe" there is no need to stay within any limits. No lines are drawn so all concern with valid standards and the integrity of the character's story line can be ignored or scrapped.

Yet not even a fictional story context should be unconditionally elastic.

A believed "middle of the road" compromise, solution, won't work because the middle position is arbitrary, unstable, shifting, once the "extreme", standard of white/black, truth/lie, good/bad, etc., are rejected.

The arbitrary middle spot is like an emotion, a feeling – pleasure or pain – that is to determine what is right/ wrong, etc. And that fluid spot is also unable to remain fixed.

A "felt good" today can become a "felt bad" tomorrow. The easy way has a powerful attraction, a shortcut for saving time and mental effort and even serving as a justification.

Yet there is always some negative price to pay when an opportunity for maintaining a positive or increasing its gain is allowed to slip away by some kind of indifference to real positive values.

A white color (best idea) and a black color (far-out idea) can be mixed, blended, into a continuum of gray tones (arbitrary mixed story ideas).

It's like when the definition of man as a rational animal is blended into some non-valid definition of anything, any time, any way, with any justification. A hero can become as anti-heroic, as flawed, as un-heroic, as anyone chooses to make him and still be labeled, "defined", as a "hero".

Then there is no longer any valid, rational scale, standard, by which to identify, evaluate and judge any character (or man) as a hero or villain, or his action as moral, legal or criminal. There is no real /unreal, true/false, right/wrong or good/bad since everything is flawed, gray, "imperfect".

No one can claim (by what standard?) to "know" what is "better" or "worse". He can only claim he (or it) cannot be either "extreme" therefore only "human" – "imperfect".

But A is A, an absolute. All shades of gray, untruth, flaws, etc., can be identified, measured and judged as

to their actual identity, status and worth.

Some existing gray areas are the types of crediting, the kind of story line ideas, the influences by the OOs, the use of guest stars and villains, etc. They all have to be explored, understood, for their actual identification, meaning, implications and consequences in producing a comic book character such as S-m.

So did the first S-m comic book provide a strong story foundation like from a real architect's design, blueprints? Could its base have necessary supporting beams of valid engineering, structural principles and selected, quality building material, to have all that is needed for what would, should be built on the foundation and to keep it becoming a unifying, worthwhile structure?

Or would its design be open up to adding all kinds of the arbitrary in size, shape, forms of floors, rooms not purposefully but haphazardly selected and not needing or wanting to pass any strict inspection or building codes?

NEXT: *"The Amazing Spider-man #2"*

### **A MINI-HISTORY**

#### **6. "Spider-woman/Spider-girl"**

© 2002 **S. Ditko**

It was around the time of the Octopus issue (#3) that Stan Lee (editor/writer) wanted to add a Spider-girl or a Spider-woman to the Spider-man series.

I was against it. We had not really done much in establishing a credible Peter Parker/Spider-man world. The Octopus issue would have made it 3+ issues.

The reader's/viewer's emotional gratification, reading/viewing pleasure level, is like a thermometer. It registers levels, degrees of accepting and rejecting the material in the story line. Anything added to or subtracted from a feature can be a turn-on or a turn-off, hot or cold.

Thomas Edison tested over a thousand different kinds of material to discover an efficient filament to make his electric light bulb a success.

One can have a hundred different ideas for a story or character but he can't meaningfully test them all in a single issue. One has to be careful in selecting the one(s) actually needed or to be useful, to help illuminate, increase the pleasing buying value of the comic book.

One test is to consider how an idea will change the already established to fit in to the now story world and its long-range effects.

A short-range acceptance, success, can become a long-range failure, a now-gratification trap.

The gimmick of guest stars and far-out space aliens is not an appropriate way to establish a credible PP/S-m story world. The out-of-place ideas, inclusions, distract from rather than help build up the needed supporting characters and the showing, understanding the heroic teenager's world.

The less outside help a hero gets, the more he alone demonstrates his abilities, determination, to overcome obstacles (personal, social, etc.) and defeat the villain. It is a greater, a real, test of his heroic personality, loyalty to real, pro-life values.

Two heroes undercut the heroic model of a man (woman) at his (her) best. They duplicate each other like carbon copies (Bulletman / Bulletgirl, Hawkman / Hawkgirl, etc.) and undermine the heroic role, heroic model.

As a team, each will need help in action against obstacles, the villain. They are often incompetent alone, needing help or to be rescued from trouble, saved, etc. They are actually models of dependency and not independent and efficacious in their chosen roles.

So another lead character does more than just split the title. It spoils the already established concept with ramifications never really considered. It is like constructing a building (without a blueprint or on a solid foundation) and wanting (for no valid reason) to attach, add, another building onto it.

Stan never worked out a S-m "blueprint" upon which S- m could be built. Changes or additions were arbitrary and did not follow some properly thought out, planned, story world.

He did not have any story synopsis about S-w joining S-m.

Stan did not insist on a S-w. She was an option and not some "seed idea" already in the S-m "seed idea" (like an acorn) which must be fulfilled, pop up, in a specific issue. I don't know what Stan had in mind for the Spider-heroine. Everyone is free to speculate on what the split S-m/S- w comic book would be, read like, look like and develop into.

There are endless questions: Who would she be, an established girl or someone new?

Would she have the same origin? The same spider powers (senses, etc.)? The same costume? The same family situation? Same type of problem personality, same kind of fighting style, etc.?

If S-w was to be different from PP/S-m, how and in what respect and why? And to what affect on the already established story line? Would J. J. Jameson have the same hostility toward S-w as toward S-m? If different, why?

And what changes would there have to be in S-m's personality? He would no longer be the dominant personality. He couldn't be seen as a loner. He would have a partner or rival or competitor. His focus would have to be on S-w and her alter ego in some kind of positive/negative relationship. To this degree, his teenage world must change.

Obviously there would have to be a very different class-mate situation concerning the hero and the heroine. Would the boy students be for S-m and the girl students for S-w with the obvious consequences of strained group relationships?

Would they even be in the same school, classes, etc?

Would they have to pretend indifference if knowing (or not knowing) each other's secret identity? What kind of complications, concerns would this entail?

If both knowing, would there be an ongoing tension, a fear of revealing the others identity in some way?

Would they be a team, each knowing the other's identity, or not a team, not knowing their identities?

Would they be interfering, competitive with each other, squabbling, bickering, like the usual childish relationships between or among Marvel heroes?

How would they share the action with villains; two against one, a team effort? Rivals, both competing and acting alone? Or together, competitive, argumentative, complaining, etc?

Would each story need a villain and a villainess for each to battle, overcome?

Would they be saving each other from harm, danger, or would S-m always be rescuing S-w?

There would be a need for equal story, panel, action space.

Whatever the chosen scenario, they would make a very different story world. It would have to have a split focus, attention, on two leading characters. But it would not be the split between hero and villain but a side issue split, a focus on hero and heroine, on their personalities and the implications and consequences.

The singularity of a lead character, the focus of action (good vs. bad) would have to be a plurality: two people would be needed because one cannot do the job and de- feat the villain. It would become "us against him".

The strongest dramatic conflict – one on one – would be compromised, weakened, lost. It would be like a championship prizefight that had more than one champion defending the title against a single challenger.

So there is the admission, belief, that no actual hero (or heroine) or no man (or woman) at his (her) best is possible or wanted. The implication is that the individual is helpless (even worthless) on his own. It is numbers that are efficacious and make the difference.

Heroes in Marvel Comics (other publishers) have become more like professional wrestling tag teams – good guys/gals against bad guys/gals or (more accurately) one grey group against another grey group.

A crime – No! That's too black and white, an absolute, thus a "wrong" (a grey) – a grey dispute where one grey group doesn't like something (the shade of another grey group – is settled by the formula "might is right".

Those conflicts, contests, can't be meaningful on any level. It's just a scenario worked up with collective action for action's sake, a performance to be continuously repeated with changes in the cast.

There are problems with teams. The Human Torch and The Thing were the two most popular members of The Fantastic Four. Yet the team-up (for the most part by the same creative team of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby) in *Strange Tales* (co-featuring Dr. Strange) failed to go over.

Antman and The Wasp had a problem besides their size. One successful team is Batman and Robin. They survived where so many other teams failed (Cat-man and The Kitten), Bulletman / Bulletgirl, The Shield/Dusty, The Wizard/Roy, etc.).

It may be the strength of Batman as a unique costumed hero and not because of any sidekick that is most responsibility for their longevity.

Is there anything that is needed to make a team successful? A successful crime-fighting team is Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. They may give us a clue to what makes a team successful: a clearly recognized leader.

SH's inductive/deductive powers make him the leader.

An adult Batman makes him the natural leader with boy Robin. It's like a battle tested soldier as the leader of a squad of raw recruits, the professional over the amateur. The more the unequal status is perceived and valid, the better the results as a team operation.

So teams can have a problem of being accepted if they don't have a recognizable, authentic authority, a valid chain of command like a military squad.

A group, team, squad needs a leader and members with various distinct skills that can be integrated into one unit to be the most effective. (TV shows) *The A-team*, *Mission: Impossible*, *Charlie's Angels*, etc., are examples and in comics: The Blackhawks, Boy Commandos, etc. They all move with one goal.

The more perceived, valid status of a leader and his followers, the better the team coordination and effectiveness. There is no disputing, disrupting, the purpose and means to some end. A team should be like a machine with no conflicting or contradictory parts.

Reed Richards was seen as the leader – intellectually, scientifically – of The F4.

The Thing and The Torch team had no real leader. They came across, not as a team, but as competitive squabblers playing spiteful kid games. Imagine everyone on a sports team or military squad wanting to play or fight in his own way.

The Torch and The Thing could have been more successful in their own feature. This would have given each one an opportunity to explore, develop, his own individuality rather than lose himself in a squabbling team that revealed only his own pettiness and childishness .

One can imagine adding someone else to a popular single hero: Zorro and Lady Zorro or Boy Zorro.

The Tarzan movie series wasn't heightened when a son was added. It just made Tarzan a parent.

Anything added to (or subtracted from) that which is already established needs to be considered and understood in regards its long-range benefits and consequences.

A change should not be merely something that sounds good at the time or some gimmick, not some expediency of the moment and certainly not for some short-term gratification.

A mistake can be impossible to correct because the addition or subtraction has ruined, contradicted something essential, even the integrity of the character (The Death of Superman).

The addition or subtraction can continue to have negative consequences. The death of Bucky created an ongoing, self-pitying Captain America. A patriotic symbol became a tearful, sobbing, tragic figure.

The introduction of Robin undercut Batman's origin, his motive of inducing fear in criminals, his purpose in becoming Batman. The team made an odd pair, a contradiction. A colorfully costumed teenager is hardly a sight which criminals will fear. Even a Boy Batman couldn't do it.

The continuing success of the team was due to the light-hearted, entertaining stories. The purpose and danger of grim crime fighting against the worst kind of criminals and killers no longer existed. It was like teaming the untouchable Elliot Ness with a boy detective, in a comedy, against Al Capone's mob.

So it depends on the valid, basic premise of the character, his integrity and how long-range one wants to consider and how to plan any changes.

One can prune, or graft onto, a plant or tamper with its roots, even transplant it to less nourishing soil. One can "do it oneself" or consider some more qualified, expert advice.

It ultimately depends on which kind of thinking and acting premises one chooses. One type can be pragmatic, concerned with the expedient, the now-benefit, or the principled type for the delayed, but real, long-range gains.

So would a S-w/S-g have been a real short- and long- range improvement? Could she have been integrated with S-m for a better story world or would she be a disintegrating element and for the worse? Maybe it wouldn't have made too much difference either way. The comic book world would just be a different and the differences would not ruin what would still be familiar. The thermometer would fluctuate but the patient doesn't yet need and aspirin or a doctor.

NEXT: "The Amazing Spider-man #4"

**A MINI-HISTORY**

## 9. "The OOs and Aunt May"

© 2003 S. Ditko

Aunt May (AM) was the source of another on-going complaint from others, outsiders (OOs) influencing an insider (Stan).

Why? Their complaints were that AM was too *old*, too *frail* and, especially, too *ugly*.

Stan agreed with them to the extent that something had to be done with AM. He wanted me to make her more visually attractive, appealing, i.e. to glamorize AM. Then she couldn't offend or scare those sensitive Spider-man (S-m) followers.

Such a makeover would mean making AM indistinguishable from a category of usual background aunts. AM was to blend, be lost, in a crowd of aunts.

Would the beauty treatment improve the S-m story world? For the OOs, the complainers, it was strictly a visual issue. But was it a *valid* issue?

If attractiveness is to be the standard regardless of context, function, who is qualified to determine standards for anything in S-m? The emotions of the OOs? Are there no other criteria but the complainers who are qualified to set the terms, the standards?

If attractiveness is to be the standard for S-m (Marvel's) characters, then why not shave off J. Jonah Jameson's (JJJ) mustache and give him a more visually appealing hair style?

Surely Peter Parker (PP) could or should also be glamorized in some way (wavy blond hair, etc.). And maybe the villains could stand less hostile actions or menacing looks (no black/evil).

Every complaint about some "unattractiveness" could necessitate some beautifying change. Naturally the beautifying change will guarantee to be better for the story world – all plusses and no minuses.

Query: Was it the visual unattractiveness of the characters that put Marvel into bankruptcy? What is visually appealing about freaks and mutants (The X-men, The Thing, etc.?).

What justifies the complaints of the OOs as acceptable, as the *deciding* operating (editing/art) principle, to change or do anything in a comic book?

AM developed from her first appearance as a plump, jovial woman (*Amazing Fantasy* #15, 1962) in the way I believe she worked best for the PP/S-m story world. The tragic death of her husband, Ben, meant AM would have the sole responsibility for raising her nephew, Peter Parker (PP). That alone would have placed a worrisome burden on her. It could explain the change in her appearance and correctness of her looks if her visual appearance needed any justifying.

But complainers rarely get beyond their emotional gratification in liking or disliking something. Their feelings are held as proof and equivalent to rational understanding and objective knowledge.

The visual contrast, visual age difference, between AM and PP in itself establishes the human drama of the real life process. The elderly have concerns with their health, responsibilities and diminishing potentials, limitations, in many ways, areas, that need attention, concern and action.

The young have concerns with their insecure position, their dependence on others, elders, to provide for their education and needs of shelter, food, clothing, etc. in life. The contrast provides a more revealing understanding with dramatic implications and consequences not possible with a younger, more attractive aunt and stable home life.

The glamorized may be more visually attractive but prove to be more dramatically bland.

The visual ages show an important difference in, a greater awareness of (from each other's perspective) what their life relationship is all about – what was, is, could be, may have to be and, ultimately, must be. It is not a stagnant frozen life but living as a real life process.

Reducing the visual age appearances, differences, would mean reducing, losing, vital life "realism", implications, truth, certainties and uncertainties that show living, life, as a process that has only one guarantee – to end.



In between lies all the possible choices and consequences. One has to accept the negatives – the unglamorous, sickness, crime, etc. – accept them but be willing to deal with them. This can reveal whether one wants to deal with real life or a "must-be" life of a fairy tale or a utopia.

Since I wasn't glamorizing AM, Stan continued to get anti-AM mail. In one AM complaint session, Stan suggested we kill off AM – let her die a natural death – and have PP for to work for JJJ at *The Daily Bugle*. I said something to the effect of "... like Clark Kent at *The Daily Planet*?"

Stan immediately realized what getting rid of AM would do to S-m. His idea, if used, would reduce S-m to a rank imitation, a copycat version, a *Brand Echh* idea. And this coming from *The House of Ideas*?

So AM would continue to exist without any facelift or glamorizing treatments (by me, anyway). This is a good example of someone just being *against* something and wanting, demanding, that it be changed or removed without any real understanding of the full context, of what one should be *for*, and what be the actual results, the factual consequences of any changed situation.

There is a dropped context, an evasion, a failure of the OOs to have, want, and need a fuller understanding. There is no real conceptual awareness, consideration, of any real negative implications or consequences.

The arbitrary changers want it both ways at the same time and in the same respect – an actual change with no adverse, negative effects. But being *against* does not actually mean being *for* something. Being *against* injustice does not mean actually being *for* justice, to actually understand the intellectual, moral distinction between the two concepts in fact, truth, action and in life.

There are recent historical examples: The Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista was overthrown and replaced by a more ruthless dictator, Fidel Castro.

Getting rid of the Shah of Iran, an American ally against Soviet communism, led to the installation of Ayatollah Khomeini, a ruthless, theocratic dictator. The then "popular" change in Iran's leadership created a far more unstable, dangerous Middle East situation and the growth of world-wide terrorism with the USA as the prime target.

It was this "against", this change for the "better" regime, that led to Khomeini putting a one millions dollar "hit" contract on Salman Rushdie, a writer/novelist. The contract (still in force) is actually directed at every independent mind. That death sentence is the penalty for daring to think, speak, write, act, for oneself – to be independent.

And one will always see how the once loudly vocal "against" becomes the not so strangely silent when/where a worse evil takes over. The so vocally brave "against" becomes cowardly, unwilling to even admit, to take any responsibility for, helping to create, perpetuate a greater injustice.

Too few people care to understand that removing a negative, a bad (claimed or real), does not mean or guarantee a better, a positive, a good, will automatically replace it. A worse result is usually the cause, aided by the usual "useful idiots", those merely "against" and blindly acting for their "just cause". Like the anti-nuclear power advocates, environmentalists, etc., they refuse to adequately understand the relevant contexts and can only help bring about worse conditions.

So it is odd that Stan and many S-m followers now claim that S-m was more "down to earth", more "realistic" (flawed, sewing/washing his own costume, etc.). Marvel even had its heroes living in New York City, a real, factual, geographical location. And, as usual, they wanted it both ways, ignoring the contradictions.

Yet, when real, natural, biological facts-of-life aspects such as old age, frailty, etc., are shown they are to be rejected, replaced by some old Hollywood star's glamorized treatment.

It is also odd that in an industry made up of stories (literature) and pictures (art) told from individual viewpoints, it is seen as wrong, bad, if it actually involves individual ideas, innovations, thinking.

There come complaints, demands, that the unique, one-of-its-kind, be rejected or blended into the bland, the barely noticeable. It is like giants must be shrunk down to pygmy size so as not to offend whom?

Maybe PP shouldn't have worn any unique costume or any costume. Why not just regular clothes and some face covering (ski mask, silk stocking, etc.). Some would still be against anything that makes them feel uncomfortable, therefore offended and demanding some change.

If the individualized and the unique should not stand out, shouldn't the credits on S-m have read: By a dialogue writer, a penciller, inker and letterer? Why should any definite, unique, specific name (person) stand out above everyone else?

Shouldn't Stan have conformed to his competitors' editing, writing, etc. to reduce, eliminate, any personal uniqueness and conform to the usual work then being done and accepted?

Moviemakers must be flooded with complaints about special effects, car chase scenes and drivers that don't obey traffic lights, exceed speed regulations, don't stay in their own lane, etc.

It is not very well understood by comic companies (publishers, editors, etc.) and others that what they advocate is *egalitarianism*, a *visual egalitarianism*.

Egalitarianism is the doctrine that espouses the *equality* of *all* men but not in the political sense of inalienable rights and equality before the law. Egalitarianism's "equality" is in the redistribution of the earned to those who did not earn it. It is for using force (law) to deprive the ambitious, successful individuals of their achievement (spirit/ ideas, prestige, material/products, wealth) that they have earned and deserve.

It is determined that we must all be alike in as many ways as possible. No one must have any advantage over another, no one better or worse off in any respect. No differences to cause any kind of jealousy, resentment or envy, no kind of superiority. All are to be reduced to some arbitrary level of human existence where there is no individuality, just bland resemblance.

Egalitarianism must forbid, punish, all ambition, choices to act, to exist above the state of the unwilling and unable to improve their own life. It's the way the environmentalist wants to bring man down, even below the state of raw nature. (The leader of the World Wildlife Fund, Prince Philip of the United Kingdom, imagined being reincarnated as a "killer virus to lower human population levels.")

Comic companies (publishers, editors, etc.) seek a cognitive, esthetic egalitarianism, a leveling down in content so nothing stands out as individualistic, unique. It takes the form of the flawed hero, the anti-hero, bringing the hero down and destroying, negating, the concept of a hero, the man who chooses to act at his best, objectively just.

It means rejecting, negating, absolutes, objectivity, rationality and white (good, hero, truth, etc.) and black (evil, villains, irrationality, etc.) so all must be gray, flawed and therefore actually indistinguishable from one another in value, worth, etc. In comics, everything must be reduced, brought down, "grayed", into some kind of "*house style*" in art and some kind of "*universe*" in story content.

It is actually a tribal "universe", a tribal mentality ruled by its taboos, conforming to the tribal dogma, and enforced, ritualistic behavior. There is *xenophobia* in fearing, hating, strangers, different ideas, talents, originality-independent minds.

At root, it is based on the *cannibal* premise where the best abilities must be sacrificed to some collective pot of conformity to gratify the one least willing to understand and act as a rational being.

So the individual's mind/ability must be forced to blend into some company identity, some prestige abstraction. Of course, there are always some privileged individuals such as the tribal chief, shaman, witch doctor and their lackeys who are entitled to some special powers, status and benefits above the tribal herd level. What a contradiction. Marvel was then actively seeking to become the *number one* comic publishing company. Marvel, Stan, were openly bragging about publishing unique material, far superior to any competitor (*Brand Echh*) and this was all done without caring to understand what makes material better, how and why. It is not done by affixing a label ("*The House of Ideas*") but by an active mind(s) seeking, exploring, risking the new, different, untested ideas.

It is like many Americans today who don't care to understand and know what their wanted, claimed, rights are, how they came to be, the price many other people had to pay to achieve those rights. The anti-gun ownership crowd is tree today and has the right to speak out against guns – thanks to the guns of the American Revolution patriots and the guns of the WW II allies.

If this was 1776, almost all politicians, most voters, would choose to be willing serfs of King George.

For further proof of some not wanting the necessary understanding, just examine the kind of government legislation, laws existing (subsidies, welfare programs, etc.), laws wanted, demanded, lobbied for and passed, all violating individual rights.

So for some, many, AM was not to be allowed to have a right to her created identity. She was to be "voted" against, "legislated" against, by write-in, "special interest" lobbies and unprincipled editorial policies. And all based on the egalitarian leveling down premise of resentment against another's unique individuality. No one is to have a right to his authentic identity, achievement.

The form of existence is to be decided by the whim of the OOs, by emotionalism.

Despite those who level down, AM remained herself, true to her character, purpose and identity – as long as I drew Spider-man.

NEXT: "The OOs and J. Jonah Jameson"